

Communication from Public

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Comments for Public Posting: Members of the City Council and City Clerk, I urge you to support arming Park Rangers. I was with the Ranger Division for 38 years, starting as a 16 year old running the projector in a nature center. During my career I saw changes in the nature of park visitation as well as a dramatic increase in park attendance that required a more intensive and park-focused law enforcement presence. These trends drove corresponding changes in the scope of the Ranger's work resulting in professional Ranger law enforcement training in the 1970s, peace officer status in the 1980s, and POST designation as a California certified agency in the 1990s. Rangers currently focus on law enforcement and public safety as their primary responsibility in addition to being ambassadors for the parks. During my career I was shot at twice and made arrests for violations up to attempted murder and kidnapping. Most of these critical incidents unfolded unexpectedly in front of me and required that I intervene immediately to protect innocent lives. There was no time to call for outside help. This scenario continues frequently with Rangers. With due respect to our fine partners at LAPD, they can't be everywhere at the same time and emergency police response to the more remote park areas might take up to a half hour or more. Over the years the City has tried a number of programs intended to shift law enforcement responsibility from Rangers to other agencies. Not a single one of these programs has been successful and every single one is now defunct. In each case the default solution was the Ranger program. The fact is that Rangers are the law enforcement in the parks where they work. It is ironic that Ranger trainees are issued a firearm when they start the police academy, attend regular firearms training alongside other peace officers, but then have to turn in the firearm the day that they graduate. Please consider the City's responsibility to give Rangers the tools that they need to protect themselves and to protect the parks. By extension this protects the families, hikers, school groups, horseback riders, sports teams, nature lovers, golfers, tourists and myriad of others who use our parks daily. Please support arming Los Angeles Park Rangers for the safety of all park users. Thank you